

Mr. Chairman, it is the hope of the Canadian delegation that question 5 in the summary and conclusions of the Commissioner General's report will not have to be answered. It would indeed be unfortunate if the activities of UNRWA had to cut back at this point in time when the refugee problem has become more acute than ever. If confronted with this dilemma, the Commissioner General will no doubt wish to consult the Advisory Committee. It would seem to us that the immediate needs of the refugees in terms of food, clothing and lodging inevitably demand high priority. But recourse to the expedient of restricting some part of the programme would reflect an abrogation of responsibility by the General Assembly as a whole.

We hope, therefore, that the Commissioner General's appeal for adequate funds will be met with an appropriate response by all members and particularly by those countries which are in a good position to assist the Agency but have not done so in the past. We hope even more that this entire question will, in the coming months, be case in a new form.

On November 22 of this year, the Security Council adopted an historic resolution. It established certain guidelines and authorized a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to make contact with the parties with the aim of promoting agreement and assisting efforts to achieve a peaceful and acceptable settlement in the area. Specific reference to the problem of the refugees is to be found in operative paragraph 2(b) of the resolution which reads as follows: "Affirms further the necessity for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem". Without in any way wishing to prejudice the delicate task of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, I should like to recall that the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his statement in the general debate on September 27, suggested that the solution to the tragedy of the Palestine refugees might be found in the context of a scheme for the economic development of the region. He said at that time:

"The principles of compensation, repatriation and resettlement enunciated in previous resolutions of our Assembly provide the necessary guidelines for settling the refugees in permanent homes. The parties directly concerned have moral and historical obligations towards the refugees which must be recognized. But it would be unrealistic to expect that they could in present circumstances carry out alone an effective programme of this kind. I would therefore hope that this Organization might give serious study to the establishment of a coordinated plan of international action aimed at regional economic development on an ambitious scale. It would help provide a basis for a solution to the refugee problem and could lead to a new era of peace and prosperity in the area. It would require the full support of the members of this Organization as well as the cooperation of the countries of the Middle East. Such a plan might encompass agricultural and mineral development, a coordinated approach to the development and utilization of water resources, and, if feasible, projects for the desalination and production of electrical power. It would appear essential that an international programme along these lines be carried out in conjunction with the settlement of other outstanding questions if it is to have any prospect of success. Nevertheless, we should not delay, for this reason, an attempt to develop a practical programme and to establish appropriate machinery. "